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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 006002

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR IO, IO/UNP, IO/SHA, DRL, DRL/MA AND EUR/WE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/15/2004

TAGS: PHUM PREL IT PREL IT LY UN LYPHUM UN

SUBJECT: CHR-59 LIBYAN CHAIRMANSHIP: ITALIANS COULD ACCEPT
"CONSTRUCTIVE" LETTER OR STATEMENT

REF: A) STATE 258439 B) ROME 5802 C) STATE 244156

CLASSIFIED BY: POL M/C TOM COUNTRYMAN, REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

1. (C) SUMMARY: ITALY CONTINUES TO OPPOSE CONFRONTATIONAL
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TACTICS TO OVERTURN LIBYA'S CHAIRMANSHIP OF CHR-59 THAT COULD
DAMAGE THE COMMISSION'S LONGER-TERM VIABILITY OR THAT LEAD
PIECEMEAL TO A FORCED VOTE ON THE MATTER. THE BERLUSCONI
GOVERNMENT'S REFLEXIVE SUPPORT FOR U.S. POLICY HAS, IN THIS
NARROW CASE, BEEN TRUMPED BY AN UNYIELDING SUPPORT FOR THE UN
SYSTEM, AND ITS CONSENSUAL DECISION-MAKING, AND A BELIEF THAT
THEIR POLICY OF ENGAGING LIBYA IS SLOWLY MOVING QADAFI IN
THE RIGHT DIRECTION. THE ITALIANS HAVE NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT
QADAFI'S REGIME AND WOULD WORK IN ADVANCE TO PREVENT MORE
PROMINENT LIBYAN POSITIONS IN THE UN SYSTEM. BUT THEY
BELIEVE THE MORE CEREMONIAL NATURE OF THE CHR CHAIRMANSHIP
MAKES IT AN APPROPRIATE POSITION TO TEST AND ENCOURAGE
QADAFI'S COMMITMENT TO REHABILITATING LIBYA'S INTERNATIONAL
STANDING. THEY ARE NOT WILLING TO JEOPARDIZE'S THE
COMMISSION'S FUTURE EFFECTIVENESS -- AND THEIR OWN FUTURE
CANDIDACY -- THROUGH AN OPEN-ENDED SERIES OF CRITICAL WEOG
LETTERS AND STATEMENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED CONDITIONALLY TO
SUPPORT A WEOG LETTER OF CONCERN AND, PERHAPS, A GROUP
STATEMENT ON LIBYA'S CHAIRMANSHIP, OFFICIALS AT PRIME
MINISTER'S OFFICE AND THE MFA TOLD US DECEMBER 16. THEIR
LIKELY SUPPORT FOR A LETTER OR STATEMENT WOULD BE CONTINGENT
UPON:

-- THE OVERALL STRATEGY: ITALY WOULD NOT AGREE TO AN
OPEN-ENDED, PIECEMEAL APPROACH THAT PRODUCED A SERIES OF
AD-HOC MEASURES CULMINATING IN A JANUARY 20 VOTE IF THE
LIBYAN CANDIDATE WAS NOT REPLACED. SUCH AN ESCALATORY
APPROACH WOULD BE OVERLY CONFRONTATIONAL, REDUCING PROSPECTS
FOR ANY PRODUCTIVE WORK AT THIS YEAR'S CHR AND ENDANGERING
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THE WEOG'S EFFECTIVENESS IN FUTURE COMMISSIONS. ITALY COULD
ACCEPT A LETTER OR STATEMENT IN LIEU OF A VOTE: BUT NOT AS A
FIRST STEP THAT CULMINATED IN A VOTE.

-- THE TONE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE LETTER AND/OR STATEMENT:
IT SHOULD NOT BE OVERLY CRITICAL OF THE AFRICAN GROUP FOR
SELECTING LIBYA BUT SHOULD INSTEAD CONCENTRATE ON STATING
CLEARLY WEOG EXPECTATIONS AND RED LINES FOR LIBYA'S
CHAIRMANSHIP.

IN RESPONSE, WE HAVE UNDERScoreD THE DANGER IN PULLING THE
PUNCH TOO MUCH; IN THAT SCENARIO, WE COULD END UP WITH BOTH A
WEAK OR DISUNIFIED EXPRESSION OF CONCERN (OUR LEAST-FAVORED
OUTCOME) AND A CONFRONTATIONAL VOTE, THE GOI'S LEAST-FAVORED
OUTCOME.

3. (C) CONTACTS IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE TOLD US PM
BERLUSCONI WAS AWARE OF THE LIBYAN CHAIRMANSHIP ISSUE; THE PM
WANTED AN OUTCOME GENERALLY CONSISTENT WITH HIS POLICY OF
REALISTIC ENGAGEMENT WITH LIBYA REINFORCED BY HIS OCTOBER
VISIT TO TRIPOLI. DURING THAT VISIT, THE ITALIAN DELEGATION
(THOUGH NOT BERLUSCONI PERSONALLY) HAD DISCUSSED WITH THE
LIBYANS A RANGE OF ACTIVITIES -- INCLUDING THE CHR
CHAIRMANSHIP -- THAT COULD GRADUALLY REINTEGRATE LIBYA INTO
THE WIDER INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. AS A RESULT, ITALY WAS IN
THE DIFFICULT POSITION OF SUPPORTING BROAD WEOG EFFORTS TO
REGISTER CONCERNS ABOUT LIBYA'S CHAIRMANSHIP WITHOUT
VIOLATING ITS BILATERAL COMMITMENT TO TRIPOLI, MADE BEFORE
THE U.S. EXPRESSED ITS STRONG OPPOSITION TO A LIBYAN CHAIR.
CONSEQUENTLY, WE LEARNED SEPARATELY FROM MAGHREB OFFICE
DIRECTOR BELLAVIA, ITALY WAS PURSUING A STATEMENT THAT
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CREATED A FRAMEWORK AND OUTLINED WEOG EXPECTATIONS FOR THE
UPCOMING CHR SESSION RATHER THAN ONE THAT EXCESSIVELY
CRITICIZED THE AFRICA GROUP'S SELECTION OF LIBYA.

4. (C) EVEN BEFORE THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN GENEVA, WE HAD
BEEN PRESSING THE CASE AGAINST LIBYAN CHAIRMANSHIP AT
SUCCESSIVELY HIGHER LEVELS, STRESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF

CONVEYING WEOG CONCERNS PRIOR TO THE HOLIDAY RECESS. WITH MINOR VARIATIONS, THE REPLY HAS BEEN THE SAME: SKEPTICISM THAT THE AFRICA GROUP COULD BE PERSUADED TO NOMINATE ANOTHER CHAIR MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMMISSION'S IDEALS; AND CONCERN ABOUT COLLATERAL DAMAGE TO THE NORMAL COMITY AMONG UN REGIONAL GROUPS. THE LATTER CONCERN CLEARLY REVOLVES AROUND ITALY'S PROSPECTIVE TENURE ON (AND, PERHAPS, CHAIRMANSHIP OF) THE 2004 SESSION OF THE COMMISSION.

15. (C) REINFORCING THE ITALIAN VIEW IS THE RELATIVE PAUCITY, IN THEIR ANALYSIS, OF COMPELLING ALTERNATIVE CHAIRS WITHIN THE AFRICA GROUP. MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR NEA BADINI COUNTERED DCM'S DECEMBER 6 PITCH ON THE ISSUE BY OBSERVING THAT LIBYA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD WAS NOT WORSE THAN ITS MAGHREB NEIGHBORS OR, FOR THAT MATTER, THOSE OF MOST MEMBERS OF THE AFRICA GROUP.

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ACTION IO-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00	PERC-00
	DS-00	EAP-00	EUR-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01
	VCE-00	NEA-00	NSAE-00	OIC-02	PM-00	IRM-00	SSO-00
	SS-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-02	NFAT-00	SAS-00
	SWCI-00	/005W					

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7341
USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
INFO EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

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16. (C) COMMENT: THE ITALIANS HAVE SUPPORTED VIRTUALLY EVERY MAJOR U.S. INITIATIVE SINCE PM BERLUSCONI ENTERED OFFICE 18 MONTHS AGO (INCLUDING STEPPING ASIDE WITHIN THE WEOG TO ALLOW THE U.S. TO REGAIN A SEAT IN THE 2003 SESSION OF THE HUMAN
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RIGHTS COMMISSION). BUT THAT SUPPORT TAILS OFF WHEN THE OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UN SYSTEM OR, IN THIS CASE, ONE OF ITS COMPONENTS, IS THREATENED (IN THEIR VIEW) BY AN OVERLY SPECIFIC U.S. OBJECTIVE. THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL NOT SUPPORT MEASURES WITHIN THE WEOG THAT ARE, IN THEIR VIEW, LITTLE MORE THAN SPEED BUMPS ON THE ROAD TO A "CONFRONTATIONAL" VOTE JANUARY 20. BUT THEY ARE PREPARED TO EXPLORE LANGUAGE THAT PUTS THE WEOG ON RECORD, AND LIBYA AND THE AFRICA GROUP ON NOTICE, REGARDING OUR CONCERNS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE 2003 SESSION.
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